DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 432 EA 032 106

AUTHOR Skiba, Russell

TITLE Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution Curricula. What Works in Preventing School Violence.

INSTITUTION Indiana Univ., Bloomington. Education Policy Center.; Nebraska Univ., Lincoln.

SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE 2000-00-00

NOTE 4p.; Part of the Safe and Responsive Schools Project Fact Sheet Series.

AVAILABLE FROM Indiana Education Policy Center, Smith Research Center, 100, 2805 East Tenth Street, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698. Tel: 812-855-1240; Fax: 812-855-0420; e-mail: adsimmon@indiana.edu. For full text: http://www.indiana.edu/~iepc/welcome.html.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Bullying; *Curriculum; Curriculum Evaluation; *Early Intervention; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; *Prevention; Program Implementation; *Violence

ABSTRACT

In the face of pervasive violence in American schools and society, many schools have begun to consider making violence prevention and conflict resolution part of their curricula. Faced with such a culture of violence, curricula that teach students the attitudes and skills they need to avoid violence seem to provide a sound strategy for violence prevention. Although differing in their emphases, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and social problem-solving curricula all attempt to increase student knowledge, to improve their awareness of feelings, and to teach new skills that can provide an alternative to violence. Due to the newness of the field, it is impossible to know how much impact such instruction can have, but evaluations of some programs have suggested that systematic and consistent violence-prevention instruction is a promising approach that can contribute to school safety. Since the field is young, schools seeking to implement the program should carefully evaluate the curriculum and plan implementation. The most important challenge in adopting such a curriculum may be to find an approach that is consistent with the school's needs and can be fully accepted by faculty to ensure a high level of commitment and consistency in implementation. (RT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 470 432

Creating a Positive Climate

Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution Curricula

What Works in Preventing School Violence

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA032106

Safe & Responsive Schools

Creating a Positive Climate

Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution Curricula

What Works in Preventing School Violence

In the face of pervasive violence in our schools and society, many schools have begun to consider making violence prevention and conflict resolution part of their curricula. Violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula teach students alternatives to violence in resolving their interpersonal and personal problems. These programs rely on ongoing instruction and discussion to change the perceptions, attitudes, and skills of students.

Overview

A number of violence prevention curricula have become available since the mid-1980's. Such programs typically strive to provide knowledge about violence and conflict, to increase students' understanding of their own and others' feelings, and to teach students the personal and interpersonal skills necessary to avoid violence.

Curricula vary in their emphasis. *Conflict resolution* curricula focus on understanding conflict and learning negotiation-based responses to conflict. *Violence prevention* curricula emphasize increasing students' knowledge about violence and teaching students alternatives to fighting. *Social problem solving* curricula tend to focus on understanding feelings and teaching students problem-solving strategies for dealing with their personal and interpersonal problems.

Lessons cover a variety of topics, including the prevalence of violence or conflict, identifying and expressing feelings, managing anger, conflict resolution, appreciating diversity, and coping with stress. Instructional formats include teacher lecture, class meeting, or discussion. Students are encouraged to explore their own reactions and responses, often through videotaped scenarios and self-reflection worksheets. Finally, most programs include a role-play component, to provide opportunities to practice alternative skills and behaviors.

Violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula are most often part of a broader program. Instruction in conflict resolution is typically presented in conjunction with a classroom or school-wide peer mediation program. Some programs provide guidelines for school discipline or classroom management that are consistent with the curricula. Others focus on building family relationships and parent involvement in the school community.

What We Know About Violence Prevention Curricula

The use of schoolwide violence prevention or conflict resolution curricula is very recent; there have been few evaluations to date. This does not mean that such programs are ineffective. Rather, it suggests that any school that commits to using a violence prevention curriculum may wish to undertake its own evaluation of the effectiveness and usefulness of the approach.

A number of programs have documented positive changes in student attitude and behavior. Among the most successful has been the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program. In a large-scale evaluation of the program, a majority of teachers reported less physical violence and increased student cooperation in their classrooms. Other documented benefits of such curricula include improvements in classroom climate and student self-esteem, reductions in fighting and other disciplinary violations, and lower rates of suspension at the middle school level and dropout at the high school level. Teachers in successful programs have reported that they find themselves listening more attentively to students.

Some curricula emphasize social cognition or social problem solving, attempting to change student thinking about social interactions. Students exposed to such programs

Some Available Curricula

Conflict Resolution

Bodine, R. J., Crawford, D. K., & Schrumpf, F. (1994). *Creating the Peaceable School: A Comprehensive Program for Teaching Conflict Resolution.* Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Community Board Program (1990). *Conflict Resolution: A Curriculum for Youth Providers.* Tulsa, OK: National Resource Center for Youth Services.

Kreidler, W. J. (1997). *Conflict Resolution in the Middle School: A Curriculum and Teacher's Guide.* Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility.

Copeland, N. D. (1995). *Managing Conflict: A Curriculum for Adolescents.* Albuquerque, NM: National Resource Center for Youth Mediation.

Violence Prevention

Prothrow-Stith, D. (1987). *Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents.* Newton, MA: Education Development Center.

Begun, R. W., & Huml, F. J. (1998). *Ready-to-use Violence Prevention Skills: Lessons and Activities.* West Nyack, NY: Society for the Prevention of Violence.

Social Problem Solving

Kusche, C. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (1994). *PATHS: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies.* Seattle, WA: Developmental Research & Programs.

Elias, M. J. (1994). *Social Decision Making and Life Skills Development: Guidelines from a School-based Program.* Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.

EA032106

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

often learn to identify a greater variety of prosocial responses to hypothetical conflict situations. It is important to note, however, that improved ability to describe solutions to hypothetical situations does not guarantee improved behavior.

The effectiveness of violence prevention curricula may well depend on how extensively the program is implemented. Teachers in successful programs are highly committed to the program and teach it regularly. In one study, student gains were directly proportional to the number of lessons they had received.

Comparisons of different approaches have found that a teacher-directed approach may be best for decreasing the isolation of at-risk students. A comparison of violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula found that both are effective, but that conflict resolution seemed more successful in reducing the most serious types of violence.

Making It Work

Since this is a new field, success of a violence prevention or conflict resolution curriculum is by no means assured. Rather, it is important that schools carefully examine the curriculum to determine if it meets their needs, plan for delivery of the curriculum, ensure adequate training and commitment, and evaluate the impact of the program locally.

Appropriateness of Curriculum. Schools implementing violence prevention or conflict resolution should carefully examine any curriculum to make sure it meets the needs of their students. The majority of programs, for example, have been developed for the elementary level. School personnel might ask a number of questions about the applicability of a violence prevention curriculum. Has this curriculum been tested in an area or with students similar to ours? Does the specific focus and scope of the program meet the needs of our students? Are the topics, presentational style, and activities recommended by the program appropriate for students at our age and grade levels?

Planning. In order to have an effect, most commercially available programs require a commitment of a certain period of time every week, perhaps extending over months. Many also require a variety of instructional approaches, including instruction, class discussion, teacher modeling, videotape, and role play. To ensure consistency, a number of decisions need to be made beforehand. What topics will we include? In what period(s) will we present the curriculum? How often and for how long?

Training and Commitment. Effective violence prevention programs are those in which there is a high level of training and commitment. Some effective programs have reported up to 20 meetings with teachers prior to the introduction of the curriculum, to ensure consistency across classrooms. Before implementing such curricula then, staff should understand the time and effort involved, in order to ensure commitment to a level of instruction that will be effective in changing student attitude and behavior.

How Do We Know It's Working? The lack of available data does not necessarily mean instructional approaches should not be used. As Gwendolyn Cooke of the National Association of Secondary School Principals and a former middle school principal states, "If it makes a difference in my school, and I have a reduction of 10 percent in some problem, those materials are O.K. by me, and I don't need researchers [to say it works]."[5] Yet if we are to be certain of the effectiveness of such "promising but untested" approaches, it is important that we monitor their impact on our students as we try them out.

Conclusions

Faced with a culture of violence, curricula that teach students the attitudes and skills they need to avoid violence seem to provide a sound strategy for violence prevention. Although differing in their emphases, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and social problem solving curricula all attempt to increase student knowledge, to improve their awareness of feelings, and to teach new skills that can provide an alternative to violence. Due to the newness of the field, it is impossible to know how much impact such instruction can have, but evaluations of some programs have suggested that systematic and consistent violence prevention instruction is a promising approach that can contribute to school safety. Since the field is young, schools seeking to implement the program should carefully evaluate the curriculum and plan implementation. The most important challenge in adopting such a curriculum may be to find an approach that is consistent with the school's needs and can be fully accepted by faculty, in order to ensure a high level of commitment and consistency in implementation.

— Russell Skiba

References

Bender, W. N., Clinton, G., & Bender, R. L. (1999). *Violence prevention and reduction in schools.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Durant, R. H. et al. (1996). Comparison of two violence prevention curricula for middle school adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 19,* 111-117.

Elias, M. J., & Allen, G. J. (1991). A comparison of instructional methods for delivering a preventive social competence/social decision making program to at risk, average, and competent students. *School Psychology Quarterly, 6,* 251-272.

Greenberg, M. T., & Kusche, C. (1998). *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book 10, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies.* Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Institute for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

Kopka, D. L. (1997). *School violence: A reference handbook.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Tolan, P., & Guerra, N. (1998). *What works in reducing adolescent violence: An empirical review of the field.* Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Institute for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

About the Safe & Responsive Schools Project

The Safe and Resoonsive Schools Project, funded by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, is dedicated to developing and studying prevention-based approaches to school safety. The Project is currently working with schools in districts in Indiana and Nebraska to integrate best-practice strategies in school violence prevention into comprehensive school-based plans for determng school disruption and violence.

Indiana: Indiana University/Richland-Bean Blossom Community Schools/ Spencer-Owen Community Schools

Contact: Dr. Russell Skiba, Indiana Education Policy Center
170 Smith Research Center
2805 E. 10th Street
Bloomington, IN 47408
812-855-1240

Nebraska: University of Nebraska/Beatnce Public Schools

Contact: Dr. Reece Peterson
202A Barkley Center
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center
Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0732
402-472-5480

© Russell Skiba & Reece Peterson (2/00)

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
X	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").